

CHAPTER 5

Public Involvement

Public involvement and outreach were key elements of this study. The public involvement program has incorporated the following elements:

- Five Public Informational Meetings;
- Cable Broadcast of Videotaped Informational Meetings on Public Access;
- Network Television Coverage of the Informational Meetings (Channels 3 and 61);
- Twenty Meetings of the Advisory Committees;
- Publication of three newsletters describing study efforts and progress;
- Operation of a toll-free information number (1-800-786-2191);
- Maintenance of a 200-person mailing list; and
- Presentations to the study area towns and their elected officials.

5.1 Public Informational Meetings and Newsletters

Public Informational Meetings were held on May 15, 1997 (West Hartford Town Hall), October 29, 1997 (West Hartford Town Hall), December 8, 1998 (Central Connecticut State University), December 16, 1998 (Asylum Avenue Congregational Church), and December 17, 1998 (UConn Medical Center).

The Public Informational Meetings were advertised in the two major daily papers and twelve weekly publications serving the study area. Meeting announcements were placed on bus routes serving the study area. Press releases were provided to more than forty broadcast and print media for their use, and the meetings were videotaped for future re-broadcast on public access channels in each study area community. The meetings consisted of a brief presentation by the study team, followed by a question and comment period. Display boards were utilized to focus discussion and survey forms were available as an additional vehicle for public comment.

- **May 15, 1997 (West Hartford Town Hall)** - The first public meeting focused on existing and future transportation needs and deficiencies associated. Emphasis was placed on the presenting the background of data associated with the MIS. Several questions were

asked about the population and employment projections utilized for the study. Comments were offered concerning the level of congestion in the corridor, especially its impact on corridor towns. The need for alternative modes of transportation was also highlighted by many who commented. The videotape was aired on public access channels including the City of Hartford.

- **October 29, 1997 (West Hartford Town Hall)** - The second public meeting focused on the alternatives being studied for the corridor. The alternatives presented included all six RAPs outlined in Chapter 3. Comments were mixed, but generally commentators suggested the need for alternative modes of transportation. Several participants talked about the problems associated with residing next to I-84 in West Hartford.
- **December 8, 1998 (CCSU), December 16, 1998 (Asylum Avenue Congregational Church), and December 17, 1998 (UConn Medical Center)** - Each of these three public meetings presented the Hybrid Package and sought reaction from the public. The presentations were tailored to focus on issues of concern in the area where the meeting was held. Comments varied. Participants from New Britain who live next to the Busway Right-of-Way expressed concern about the potential for noise and air quality impacts. In Hartford skepticism was expressed regarding the potential for success of the busway as compared to the light rail alternative. Some expressed concern about the balance of highway related improvement recommendations versus public transit related. In Farmington, the realization of growing congestion as related to development was acknowledged by participants. The concept of a busway was endorsed during comments.

Hartford West Newsletters. Editions of the Hartford West Newsletter were issued in May 1997, October 1997, and December 1998. The [May 1997](#) Newsletter contained a description of the MIS process, descriptions of preliminary issues which have been identified, notice of the May 15 public information meeting, and publicity for the Hotline number. The [October 1997](#) Newsletter contained a definition of the six reasonable alternative packages (RAPs), preliminary concept draw-

ings, and notice of the October 29 public informational meeting. The [December 1998](#) Newsletter contained the hybrid package of recommendations made as a result of the study, information about the proposed busway and notice of the December public informational meetings. The Newsletters and Display Advertising are included in the [Appendix](#) of this report.

Supplemental Public Meetings. In addition to the public informational meetings, the following meetings were held with study area interest groups:

- West End Civic Association;
- Parkville/Asylum Group at Hartford Seminary;
- West End, West Hartford Vision (Elmwood) at West Hartford;
- West Hartford Home Owners Group;
- New Britain Chamber of Commerce;
- Newington Business Leaders;
- City of Hartford Transportation Committee meetings (3);
- Parkville Revitalization Committee meetings (3);
- Town of West Hartford Department Heads and Directors;
- City of Hartford Department Heads and Directors;
- Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency; and
- Capitol Region Council of Governments.

5.2 ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

At the outset of the study, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and a Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) were established by ConnDOT to provide input from study area residents and their representatives, as well as other state and federal agencies. The TAC and PAC include representatives from each of the cities and towns within the study area and other public agencies. Participating agencies and municipalities include:

- Capitol Region Council of Governments;
- Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency;
- Town of Farmington;
- Town of Newington;
- Town of West Hartford;
- City of Hartford;
- City of New Britain;
- Greater Hartford Transit District;
- CT Transit;
- New Britain Transportation Company;
- Connecticut Office of Policy and Management;
- State Historic Preservation Office;
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency;
- Greater Hartford Rideshare Corporation;

- Connecticut Department of Economic Development;
- Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection;
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers;
- Federal Highway Administration;
- Federal Transit Administration; and
- Amtrak.

The twenty Advisory Committee meetings are described below.

October 29, 1996 – PAC This first PAC meeting at the South Congregational Church discussed the background of the Major Investment Study, along with the study scope of work and the role of the PAC and TAC.

November 12, 1996 – TAC At the first TAC meeting, held at the ConnDOT Main Office, participants discussed the study area definition, background of the Major Investment Study, the study scope of work and the role of the PAC and TAC.

January 17, 1997 – TAC The second TAC meeting at ConnDOT was an overview of the data collection process, and a briefing on CORFLO modeling and study outreach initiatives.

February 19, 1997 – TAC This meeting at West Hartford Town Hall was a workshop on goals, objectives, and performance measures and a discussion of preliminary issues.

March 18, 1997 – TAC At this TAC meeting, held at Farmington Town Hall, the draft goals, objectives and performance measures, and draft issues and problem areas were distributed and discussed further.

April 28, 1997 – TAC Held at the Hartford City Hall, this TAC meeting consisted of a presentation of current and future deficiencies report, an overview of alternative strategies, and an initial screening of strategies.

May 21, 1997 – TAC The Statement of Purpose and Needs document, Technical Report #1, was distributed for comment at this meeting at Newington Town Hall.

June 5, 1997 – PAC The second PAC meeting held was also held at South Congregational Church. Participants reviewed the first Technical Report, the Purpose and Needs Statement. They also discussed employment and population changes and general Reasonable Alternative Package (RAP) themes, and were briefed on computer modeling results.

June 26, 1997 – TAC The purpose of this TAC meeting, held at ConnDOT, was to discuss general RAP themes.

July 24, 1997 – TAC This TAC meeting, at the New Britain City Hall, served as an overview of the RAPs and an update on specific strategy elements.

September 8, 1997 – TAC This discussion of the detailed RAPs was at a TAC meeting at West Hartford Town Hall.

October 16, 1997 – PAC At the third PAC meeting, also held at South Congregational Church, the study team gave a presentation of the detailed RAPs.

October 22, 1997 – TAC At this TAC meeting, held at the Farmington Public Library, the study team gave a presentation of the detailed RAPs.

November 21, 1997 – TAC Held at Hartford City Hall, this TAC meeting consisted of a review of the second Technical Report, Screening and Scoping, with a discussion on demand modeling.

December 2, 1997 – PAC The fourth PAC meeting, at South Congregational Church, was a review of the second Technical Report, Screening and Scoping, with a detailed discussion on modeling and ridership projections.

March 11, 1998 – TAC Held at Newington Town Hall, this TAC meeting was a discussion of the results of the alternative's performance analysis and baseline traffic and ridership forecasts.

April 14, 1998 – PAC This PAC meeting, also held at South Congregational Church, was a discussion of issues such as HOV lanes, a transit station at Route 9 and I-84, rail versus busway transit operations, and the role of arterials for future traffic.

November 13, 1998 – TAC This TAC meeting at ConnDOT served as an overview of the third Technical Report, Assessment of Transportation Performance, and a discussion of the proposed hybrid package.

November 19, 1998 – PAC This PAC meeting at the South Congregational Church was a recap of the preferred alternative and an introduction of the hybrid package.

January 13, 1999 – PAC At the final PAC meeting, also held at South Congregational Church, the participants

reviewed recommendations for the Action Plan for Implementation of the Hybrid Reasonable Alternatives Package.

5.3 UPDATE OF LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Once the Hartford West PAC selected a Recommended package of Improvements, the Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (CCRPA) each voted to adopt the recommendations and approve further study. In early 1999, CRCOG underwent the process of updating the Long Range Transportation Plan to include the recommendations outlined in [Chapter 4](#). These recommendations included constructing a dedicated busway between Hartford and New Britain, rebuilding the I-84/Flatbush interchange, and revising the I-84/Route 4/Route 6 interchange. The following steps were taken by CRCOG to update the plan:

- February 3 – Notice of new plan mailed to town clerks and libraries and printed in the Hartford Courant – announced opening of public comment period, how to obtain a copy, and dates of the public information meetings and CRCOG meetings;
- February 16 – Notice of Public Meeting printed in the Hartford Courant;
- February 22 – CRCOG Transportation Committee Meeting – public comment received;
- February 23 – Public Information Meeting held;
- February 24 – CRCOG Policy Board Meeting – public comment received;
- March 4 – Notice of public meeting printed in Hartford Courant;
- March 11 – Public Information Meeting held;
- March 15 – CRCOG Transportation Committee Meeting – public comment received; and
- March 31 – Policy Board adopted the Regional Transportation Plan.

The process employed by the CCRPA involved meeting with the Transportation Committee and the Policy Board at the Annual Meeting. On December 3, 1998, the Transportation Committee was briefed on the results of the MIS and the potential for impact on New Britain and the Central Connecticut Region. At the Annual Meeting, questions and comments were received from representatives of member towns. Following discussion the CCRPA voted to support the environmental study required for the next step in implementing the New Britain-Hartford Busway.

5.4 ISSUES FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS

During the public outreach phase, a number of issues were raised that will require further study during subsequent study phases, these include:

Coordination with the CRCOG Regional Transit Strategy. While the busway has been selected by CRCOG and CCRPA as the preferred transportation alternative, there is a continuing need to coordinate with the on-going CRCOG Regional Transit Strategy (RTS) and ConnDOT's statewide transit studies. Issues to be resolved by the RTS include finance and operations of the busway. Region-wide route planning for the long term must consider the potential for travel time savings associated with the busway.

Downtown Bus Circulation. Buses using the New Britain - Hartford Busway will either pick-up and discharge riders from stations along the busway or leave the busway to circulate on city streets. Especially in downtown Hartford, it will be important to plan for the circulation of buses using traffic signal preemption or dedicated bus lanes. Impacts on on-street parking, pedestrian accessibility, and business operations should be considered.

Busway Stations. Preliminary locations have been defined for twelve (12) stations to be located along the busway. More detailed site specific analysis should be performed considering social, environmental, and economic analysis. Bus routing and park and ride opportunities will be important elements in a comprehensive analysis of traffic impacts. Other factors to be considered will include:

- **Station Aesthetics** - Opportunities to highlight the unique qualities of stations and the communities in which they reside will be an important element in the acceptance of the Busway and its station locations.
- **Joint Development** - Several station locations offer unique opportunities for joint development. In addition to sites in Downtown New Britain or Hartford, stations near Central Connecticut State University, Elmwood, Parkville, and Aetna offer a unique opportunity for joint development. Public - private partnerships can level private capital and increase economic vitality.
- **Pedestrian and Modal Linkages** - A major ingredient in station planning and design will be defining

pedestrian and other modal linkages to the neighboring communities. Whether pedestrian, transit, bicycle, or auto, effective linkages will be a critical element in busway success.

Community Participation in Advisory Groups. Community participation and support will be important in the continuing implementation of the Hartford West MIS recommendations. It would be appropriate to include neighborhood and community representation on Advisory Groups that contribute to project development.

Multi use Pathways. The potential for multi-use pathways - pedestrian and bicycle - should be considered in each of the MIS recommendations. For the busway, the potential exists to coordinate with the Park River Greenway and Pope Park restoration. Other links in the pathway system could either be part of the rail right-of-way or routed along existing streets. The West Side Access Study also offers the potential to blend pedestrian and bicycle improvements with roadway reconstruction.

Adrian's Landing & Downtown Development. Proposals to develop Adrian's Landing in concert with other development proposals in Downtown Hartford were made late in the study process. However, the proposals will reinforce the viability of a successful busway project. In fact, the flexibility of bus operations will ideally suit the special needs of the developments. It will be important to study the special routing needs to assure expeditious routing from the busway to the development sites.

Other Issues and Concerns. In addition to the above issues, the following are additional topics of concern:

- Negotiations with Amtrak to operate the planned services between Newington Junction and Union Station;
- Entering and exiting points for buses along the busway;
- Reevaluation of bus routes that may use all or part of the busway for service especially those that provide for reverse commutation to suburban job locations;
- Evaluation of structures along the busway to determine the need for rehabilitation or reconstruction;
- Integration with development plans in Parkville, Charter Oak, Elmwood, and other areas in Hartford and West Hartford; and
- Development of a signal system for grade crossing control.